1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
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It is believed by the Sarakatsani that the interests of unrelated families are opposed and, indeed, mutually destructive. The local gathering of families which in summer happen to graze the pastures and enjoy citizenship rights of the same village, has little cohesion as a group except when on a rare occasion, such as a village festival, it breaks into brief and violent opposition to the villagers; and it has no organization beyond the ephemeral political combinations which appear at the time of local village elections. The idea of the total community is, of course, important; it represents a way of life in opposition to the ways of peasants, merchants, and bureaucrats. But the community, too, lacks any structure of authority or effective organization; and, in part, for the same reasons, that is to say the solidarity, exclusiveness, and mutual opposition of the families which form it.

While it is true that the total community (or the local gathering of families as a segment of it) is not an organized social group, it nevertheless defines a social space within which values are shared and the conduct of men and women is evaluated by other Sarakatsani. These values concern, especially, right ways of acting in family and kinship roles and the sex-linked moral characteristics which a man or woman ought to exhibit when he, or she, stands forward as the protagonist of the family and the guardian of its honour. Such evaluations imply a hierarchy of prestige. And it is precisely through mutual competition in terms of strength, wealth, and a reputation for honour, that the opposed families, and groups of related families, are associated with one another in a coherent and regular manner.

To these general features of the community it is necessary to add a brief consideration of particular geographical and historical factors which help to explain the presence of the Sarakatsani in the Zagori. Geographically Zagori is the western flank of the Pindus range immediately north of the approaches to the Metsovo pass, which forms its southern boundary; the mountain Mitsikeli is its western limit, and the sweep of the river Aóös contains it from the east and the north. The ridges of the Pindus, which effectively separate the eastern and western coastal plains of continental Greece, run in a north-west to south-east direction. The vast pressures which created these folds came from the east so that the escarpments present extremely abrupt

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precipices and tend to 'lean over' towards the west. Thus, in general, the western slopes of the Pindus, as in parts of Zagori, present an extremely difficult terrain over which movement is not easy. Many of the valleys are narrow and steep-sided and the two principal rivers Aóös and Vikos lie in deep and formidable ravines. The canyon of Vikos is a remarkable natural feature 4,000 ft. in depth.

The most important sheep grazing area of the Zagori is the Gamila feature whose highest peak is 8,140 ft. above sea level. On the higher slopes of this mountain the important sheep villages of Papingo, Tsepelevo, Kapesovo, Vradeto, and Skamneli, to mention only the villages on its western flank, graze 33,000 sheep and goats. The rocks of this mountain, as of the other high peaks in Zagori, are of limestone formation; but the smaller features and the valleys are mostly rocks of sandstone. At the contact lines between the permeable limestone and the sandstone there are often springs and streams fed by the melting snows and the abundant rain, for this is the wettest area of Greece with, in places, an annual rainfall of 50 inches. The limestone slopes produce a sparse but fine grass which the shepherds claim is the best grazing for the milking or pregnant ewe. On some of the lower slopes in the eastern Zagori, especially those which face eastwards, there are considerable forests of silver fir and Corsican pine and a grass which is more luxuriant. The shepherds, however, prefer the thin grasses of the open limestone slopes, and comparative figures of milk yields appear to support this preference.

The more important grazing villages of the Zagori are situated 3,000–4,000 ft. above sea level and the pastures are generally found above the village to an altitude sometimes as high as 6,000 ft. Snow falls on the higher pastures as early as the first days in November and the villages themselves are often deep in snow from Christmas until the middle of March. These are the physical and climatic conditions which lead to the transhumant economy—abundant and, generally, well watered summer grasslands with maximum day temperatures which seldom exceed 80°F. in the village, or 70°F. on the higher pastures, but snow and bitter cold which force the shepherds to take their animals to the plains in winter. In the higher villages of Zagori a few sheep and goats are kept under cover during the

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winter, but there is neither enough hay nor sufficient steading to attempt this on any considerable scale. Similarly, villagers in the plains may keep some sheep through the summer despite a smothering heat and parched grazing. But the condition of these animals is meagre.

Yet it was the Sarakatsani rather than the people of Zagori who exploited, and continue to exploit, these pastoral resources of grass and water; and this is a fact that has to be explained on historical grounds.

The Turks under Sinan Pasha captured Jannina in 1430, and that part of Epirus which now lies between the Albanian frontier and the town of Arta remained an Ottoman possession until its cession to Greece as recently as 1913. From the earliest period of the occupation a majority of these lands were divided into military fiefs. The fief-holders, tenants-in-chief, in exchange for certain military commitments enjoyed the revenue from a number of taxes including the tithe of one-tenth, but the cultivators, mainly Christians, possessed a right of secure tenure in their land which lapsed only if they did not cultivate it over a period of three years. From time to time, however, and by various methods (often through the expropriation of the rights of peasants who had fallen into debt), fiefs were converted into private properties, chiftliks, on which the villagers became métayers, conceding half the produce of their cultivations to the landowner and possessing no certain rights of tenure which the latter did not choose to recognize.

The villages of Zagori, however, succeeded not only in defending their limited rights as Christian villagers in military fiefs but also in persuading the Turks to grant them other and more important privileges. By the eighteenth century the forty-six villages had developed a confederate alliance. Each village elected a representative to a council which in turn appointed a general intendant for Zagori who was established in Jannina as administrator of the confederation's affairs in liaison with the Ottoman authorities. There were three essential privileges which it was the task of this representative to defend; the right of the confederation to collect and deliver to the imperial government taxes owed by the member villages (other than the dues payable to the fief-holders); the right of Zagori villages to administer their own affairs, to hear cases of civil law between

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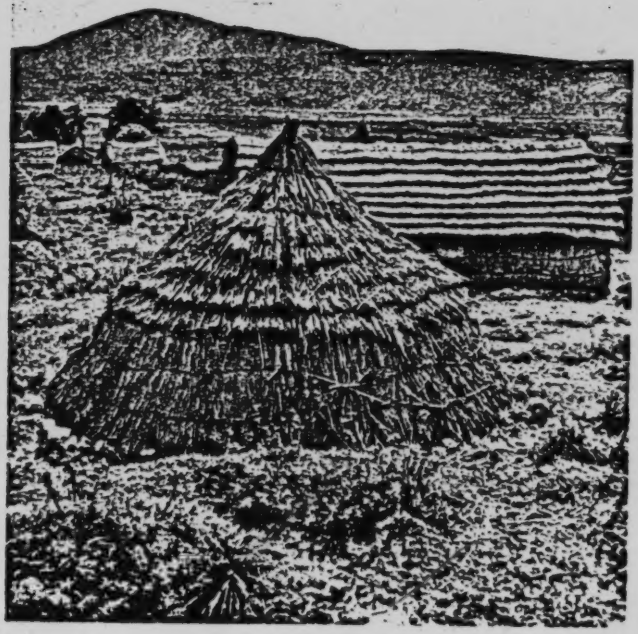

4. Stani in Winter

[facing p. 208]

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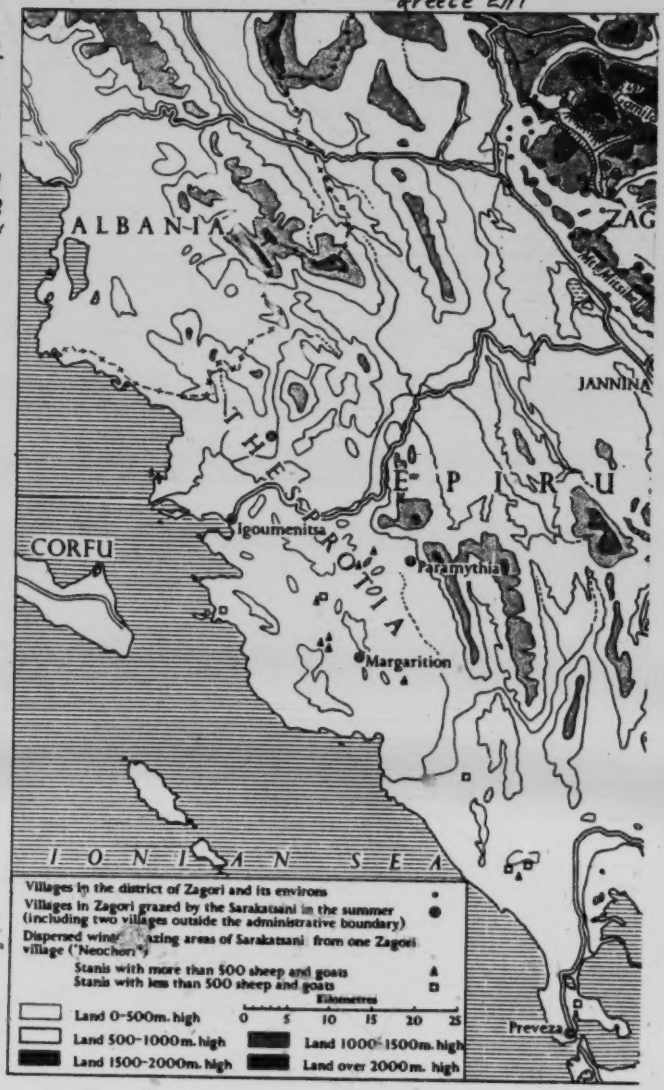
ALBANIA
ZAG
JANNINA
E P I R U
Igoumenitsa
CORFU
Paramythia
Margarition
I O N I A N S E A
Preveza
Villages in the district of Zagori and its environs
Villages in Zagori grazed by the Sarakatsani in the summer (including two villages outside the administrative boundary)
Dispersed winter grazing areas of Sarakatsani from one Zagori village ("Neochori")
Stanis with more than 500 sheep and goats
Stanis with less than 500 sheep and goats
Kilometres
0 5 10 15 20 25
Land 0-500m. high
Land 500-1000m. high
Land 1000-1500m. high
Land 1500-2000m. high
Land over 2000m. high

Map of the Epirus Indicating Summer and Winter Grazing Areas of the Zagori Sarakatsani

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[P364-B]

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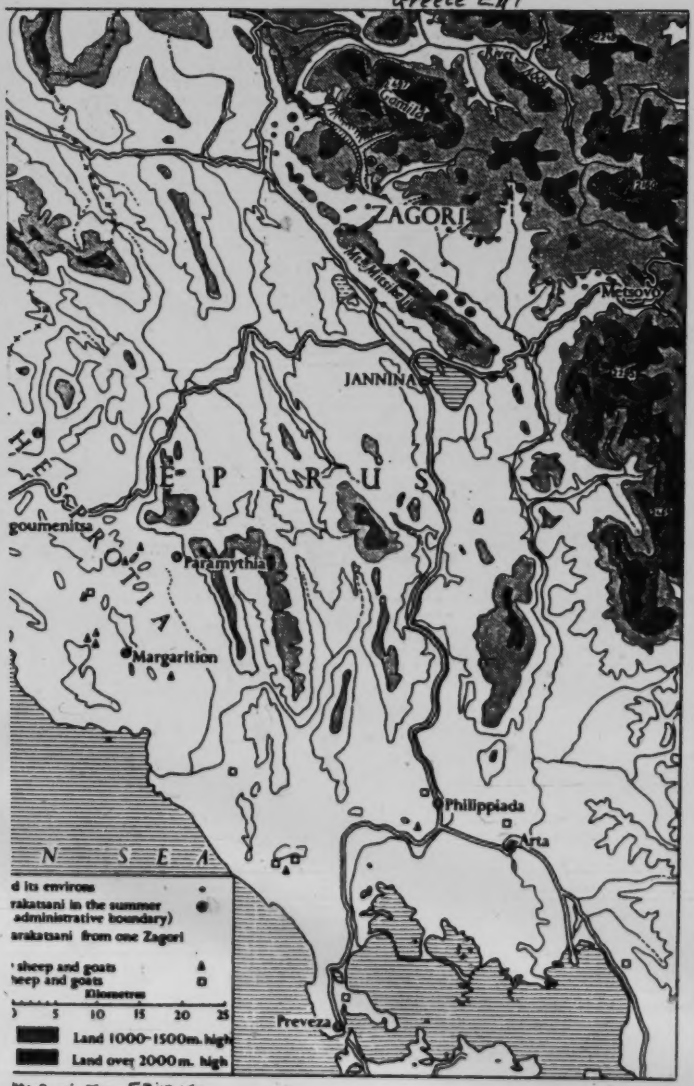

Map of the Epirus

Indicating Summer and Winter Grazing Areas of the Zagori Sarakatsani

reached to the ground, capes of so coarse a weave and so stiff with rain that they looked as though their incumbents could almost step forth and leave them standing like sentry boxes. I next saw them in March the following year, when I was riding across Greek Macedonia and stayed a night in one of their smoky wigwams. Since then I had seen them again and again, all over northern Greece, in the plains in winter and in the mountains in summer, but always on the skyline or in the middle distance. True nomads, these self-appointed Ishmaels hover on the outskirts of ordinary Greek life as fleetingly as a mirage, only manifesting themselves to ordinary mortals in far-away glimpses. Suddenly, at a ravine's twist far from the scorched lowlands, one comes across their impermanent hamlets of conical huts on high ledges of the Pindus and the Rhodope mountains and in the sierras of Roumeli; and in winter, gazing down from the snows that have banished them, one can discern their clustering huts in the plains, the ascending smoke, and the slowly grazing flocks.

Every spring their beasts and their long caravans of horses, laden with all they possess, can be seen winding up into the thawed mountains, or halted around a sudden village of somber tents, to stream downhill again later to the withered autumnal plains which the rains will soon turn green. One discovers them binding lopped branches and osier twigs into the hemispherical skeletons of the huts which will house them for the season; shelters whose blackened and molting thatch will later mark where they have settled for a few months and vanished from again. Sometimes a far-off barking and the murmur of bells hint at their presence deep in the ilex woods or along a dazzling canyon where nothing stirs except, perhaps, a pair of floating eagles. Besides these rare apparitions, this fugitive community of about eighty thousand souls and of flocks amounting to several million head seems to have the gift of invisibility.

UNLIKE the seminomads of Greece — the Koutzovlachs and the Karagounis, who all have mountain villages from which to migrate and to which they return after their half-yearly journeys in search of winter pasture — the Sarakatsáns have nothing more solid than their abodes of wicker and rush. All of them, however, look to some range of mountains, some fold or cordillera where they have grazed their flocks for centuries of summers, as their home. Their lowland pastures are more variable, an uncertain sojourn with few claims on their allegiance. At the turn of the century the Sarakatsáns of northern Greece were the

/19 cont./

Sarakatsani depart for the mountains. And in the fall, around the 26 October, the festical of Saint Demetrius, they leave the mountains and come down to the plains.

These movements are ascribable to the very method of herding (5)

5. See M. Sorre: Les fondements de la géographie humaine, vol. II, part 2, p. 646-647.

that the Saracatsan carry on and to the needs of their flocks, on which they are absolutely dependent.

In fact, once transplanted to the Greek mountains which are formed of fissured limestone, the Sarakatsani were able to carry on but a single economic activity: the herding of sheep and goats. These two species are the only ones that could derive benefit from the meager natural pastures which are found on these steep slopes with their scrub vegetation. (6)

6. See P. Veyret: Géographie de l'élevage, p. 22 and 26.

The surface of the land alone presents numerous inconveniences. It is known that temperature drops with altitude. A rise of 200 meters is the equivalent of a distance of 300 kilometers in the direction of a more northerly latitude. (7)

7. See P. Veyret: Ibid., p. 41.

Winter thus comes rapidly in the mountains of the Mediterranean zone, and it is particularly severe there, despite the generally temperate climate prevailing in the Hellenic Peninsula. Vegetation can no longer thrive, humidity reaches a degree harmful to the health of the sheep, the snow endangers their lives. A change of habitat thus becomes necessary. The Sarakatsani then come down into the valleys in search of more verdant and climatically milder regions.

When spring arrives, a spring which in Greece actually lasts only a few days, the valleys and grasslands dry up rapidly, the days are too warm for the livestock to endure the temperature, (8)

8. It is very characteristic to note that the sedentary stock-raisers of Greece, the "Karagounides"